

Baltic Issue Is Raised in Baker Talks

U.S. Aides Link Crisis To Soviet Trade Gains

By Don Oberdorfer
Washington Post Staff Writer

MOSCOW, May 16—Secretary of State James A. Baker III said today that "the absence of a dialogue" between the Soviet government and the three breakaway Baltic republics "is not encouraging," as State Department officials indicated that the secession struggle could affect the U.S. decision on granting trade benefits to the Soviet Union.

Baker spoke to reporters as he arrived at a six-hour meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at which he raised U.S. concerns about Moscow's actions in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

In Vilnius tonight, the Lithuanian legislature passed a resolution offering to suspend all laws it had adopted to carry out its March 11 declaration of independence if Moscow agrees to open negotiations on the crisis. [Story on Page A39.]

Baker declined to say whether the Soviet economic blockade of Lithuania or the tensions with Latvia and Estonia would interfere with the summit meeting of President Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev May 30 to June 3. "Let me give you a comment after I have a

chance to talk to some of my [Soviet] interlocutors," Baker replied to a reporter's question.

In Washington, Bush said that Soviet pressure on the Baltic republics "has certainly put some tension on the summit," but he vowed to press ahead for arms control agree-

ments with Moscow. Bush called for "release of that economic pressure on Lithuania" and said, "That could clear the air fast." But, he added, "Until something like that happens, there will be tension."

"We have a broad agenda of items

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that we must go forward on," Bush said in a White House news conference. "We have negotiated with the Soviets when all of Eastern Europe was in captivity and when we had Cold War times.

"I'm unhappy about the state of play in the Baltics because I'd like to see them obtain their desire of freedom as soon as possible. But I feel it's important from our standpoint, . . . and indeed the whole world, that we have these discussions with Mr. Gorbachev."

Questioned about delays in settling a strategic arms accord, Bush said he did not know if the details could be agreed upon before the summit, but said "if they're not, we're going to keep on, because we want a START agreement, and I'm convinced the Soviets want a START agreement."

Bush pledged at the Malta meeting with Gorbachev last December that he would seek to negotiate a

trade pact with Moscow and provide most-favored-nation trade benefits by the June summit if the Soviet Union put into law the liberal emigration rules it has followed in recent months. Negotiations on a U.S.-Soviet trade agreement are virtually complete, and Soviet officials informed Baker that the emigration bill is scheduled to be considered by the Supreme Soviet on May 31, while Gorbachev is in Washington for the summit.

In the meantime, though, the Senate on May 1 voted overwhelmingly to ask Bush not to submit trade benefits for the Soviet Union while coercion continues to be applied against the Baltic states. Asked if this might cause Bush to hesitate in providing the economic benefits he had promised last year, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Schifter told reporters, "I'm quite sure the president of the United States pays attention to what the Senate does."

Earlier in the day, Baker met for

45 minutes with 15 Soviet "refuseniks," persons who have sought in vain to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Noting that the United States is still following 79 cases of longterm refusal—compared to thousands several years ago—Baker told the group, "It's very important to us that these people be permitted to freely emigrate from the Soviet Union."

Baker and Shevardnadze met for four hours tonight, then called in their arms control experts to meet for another two hours. Following that, expanded arms control teams met without the ministers into the night.

Baker said today that he had made "some new proposals" on the arms issues when he met Shevardnadze in Bonn May 4. "We've gotten a preliminary response back from him to those that leaves us with some ground we still have to cover," Baker said. He added that "we still have a pretty good road to travel" before reaching the agree-

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ments that Bush and Gorbachev had predicted last December.

Baker also met today with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who is completing a visit to the Soviet capital to discuss Middle East issues and Egypt's negotiations with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Mubarak said he had heard "nothing positive from the direction of Mr. [Yitzkhak] Shamir," the Israeli prime minister.

Officials in the Baker party continued to express surprise at Gorbachev's decision, which was made known to them last week, to visit Minnesota and California June 3-4 after leaving Washington.

While a U.S. tour of some kind had long been a possibility, the officials said. Shevardnadze had informed Baker during their meeting in Namibia March 20 that no travel beyond the Washington area was possible for the Soviet president this time because of important business at home.

But when a schedule of Gorba-

chev's activities was presented to Baker by Ambassador Yuri Dubinin last week, it included a visit to Canada on the way to Washington and stops in the two U.S. states after the Bush meetings.

"We are all scratching our heads about what happened," said a State Department official. There was speculation that the extra stops may mean that Gorbachev feels more secure about the situation at home, making a slightly longer North American trip possible, or that he now believes the summit will be so successful that he can bask in U.S. acclaim afterward.

Soviet officials, however, maintain that additional stops had been under consideration for a long time because Gorbachev was curious to see something of the United States outside New York and Washington.

It was learned that after leaving California, Gorbachev will fly to Siberia rather than returning to Moscow, a logistical fact that may have played a part in his decisions.

A Soviet official said that Minnesota was selected because of an invitation from Gov. Rudy Perpich and business leaders and because of the longtime good relations between the Soviet Union and several prominent Minnesota-based corporations. Northern California was chosen, the official said, because of the attractions of San Francisco, which can be enjoyed quickly, and nearby Stanford University, where Gorbachev also had an invitation.

The California stop also facilitates a meeting with former president Ronald Reagan, who had invited Gorbachev, although the meeting is expected to be in northern California rather than in Reagan's southern California home. A stop in Iowa was also considered but not accepted, primarily for logistic reasons, the official said.

Staff writer David Hoffman contributed to this report from Washington.